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Khashoggi killing: UN human rights expert says Saudi Arabia is responsible for “premeditated execution”

GENEVA (19 June 2019) – Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was the victim of a premeditated extrajudicial execution, for which the State of Saudi Arabia is responsible, according to a [report](#) published today by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary killings.

Following a six-month investigation, Agnes Callamard issued her findings into the killing last October of Mr Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, analyzing evidence on the basis of international human rights law, and considering steps that could have prevented his murder.

“The circumstances of Mr Khashoggi’s death have led to numerous theories and allegations, but none alters the responsibility of the Saudi Arabia State,” the report reads. “Saudi state agents, 15 of them, acted under cover of their official status and used state means to execute Mr. Khashoggi.

“His killing was the result of elaborate planning involving extensive coordination and significant human and financial resources. It was overseen, planned and endorsed by high-level officials. It was premeditated.”

The report cites six violations of international law:

- the prohibition against arbitrary deprivation of life, a fundamental principle of international law;
- the prohibition against extraterritorial use of force as enshrined in the UN Charter;
- the requirement that states use consular missions for official purposes;
- the prohibition against torture, under the terms of the Convention Against Torture, ratified by Saudi Arabia, and;
- the prohibition against enforced disappearance, and;
- in killing a journalist, the State of Saudi Arabia committed an act inconsistent with a core tenet of the United Nations, the protection of freedom of expression.

“The killing of Mr Khashoggi thus constitutes an international crime over which other States should claim universal jurisdiction. I call on those States to take the necessary measures to establish their competence to exercise jurisdiction under international law over this crime of extrajudicial execution,” Callamard said.

The Special Rapporteur also determined that there was credible evidence, warranting further investigation of high-level Saudi officials’ individual liability, including that of the Crown Prince.

Following the execution of Mr Khashoggi, the report notes that Saudi Arabia took timid steps towards

- the responsibility to investigate, effectively, transparently, and in good faith;
- the duty of international cooperation in investigation of unlawful death;
- fair trial guarantees; and
- the obligation of non-repetition.

Callamard called on the Human Rights Council, the Security Council or the UN Secretary-General to conduct an international follow-up criminal investigation for the purpose of determining individual liability and identifying options towards judicial accountability.

The report stated that it was troubling that to date the execution of Mr Khashoggi had been met with so few effective international responses, whether legal, political or diplomatic although a number of States had issued targeted sanctions against Saudi officials.

"These must continue. They are important but insufficient. The crime committed was a State killing. These particular sanctions against 17 or more individuals act as a smokescreen, diverting attention away from State responsibility," the report reads. "The current sanctions also fail to address the central questions of chain of command and of senior leadership's responsibilities for and associated with the execution."

The report also called on Saudi Arabia to release all individuals imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their opinion and belief; and to undertake an in-depth assessment of the actors, institutions and circumstances that made it possible for the execution of Mr Khashoggi.

The report also includes a range of recommendations addressed to Turkey and the United States, as well as to Member States generally and corporate actors. She further recommends the establishment of new mechanisms at UN level to strengthen the prevention and criminal investigation of targeted killings. The Special Rapporteur is very grateful to the Government of Turkey for its good will and cooperation.

ENDS

Ms. Agnes Callamard (France), Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, has a distinguished career in human rights and humanitarian work globally. Ms. Callamard is the Director of Columbia Global Freedom of Expression at Columbia University and has previously worked with Article 19 and Amnesty International. She has advised multilateral organizations and governments around the world, has led human rights investigations in more than 30 countries, and has published extensively on human rights and related fields.

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